

**TOWN OF NORTHFIELD
BOARD OF SELECTMEN
Minutes of September 9, 2013**

- I. ROLL CALL.** Select Board Chair John Quinn III, Selectmen Chris Bradley, Brad Denny, Matthew Gadbois, and Kenneth W. Goslant. Also present were Town Manager Rob Lewis, Acting Clerk Ken McCann, Highway Superintendent Peter G. DeMasi, and Laura Hill-Eubanks (Northfield's CVRPC Representative).

Chair Quinn called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

- II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE.** The Board members and the public were asked to rise and recite the Pledge of Allegiance.

- III. SET/ADJUST AGENDA.** Manager Lewis stated that the warned "Executive Session" will not be needed tonight. Also, Larry Drown had asked to be placed on the agenda under "Public Participation" but was not in attendance.

IV. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

- a. Laura Hill-Eubanks: Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission (CVRPC) Update.** Ms. Hill-Eubanks, who is Northfield's Select Board-appointed representative to the CVRPC, provided an update on recent CVRPC activities, such as the proposed merger with the Central Vermont Economic Development Corporation (CVEDC), the development of a new regional plan, etc. Ms. Hill-Eubanks asked if the Board members had any questions regarding her report.

Selectman Bradley said he is very conflicted regarding this proposed merger. Although some good things would result, he agrees that the new voting structure would benefit the larger communities (i.e. Montpelier and Barre) at the expense of the smaller ones. Ms. Hill-Eubanks expected that a vote on this merger would be taken at the CVRPC meeting tomorrow night (09/10/13). Although most of the public comments provided at recent CVRPC meetings have been negative, she is unsure how the vote will go. Selectmen Bradley and Denny volunteered to attend the meeting on behalf of the Board.

Chair Quinn stated that he also has mixed feelings about this proposed merger. He felt that the suggested negative impact on Northfield is overstated as this is not a small town. He would appreciate feedback from the attendees as this is an important development. Selectman Bradley is still concerned that Montpelier and Barre would have too much control over the decision-making process and would receive the lion's share of benefits.

Selectman Denny stated that Northfield's major priority should be increasing its tax base. He felt that Norwich University's current expansion is creating economic opportunities for the community that can and should be assisted by a regional economic development organization. Ms. Hill-Eubanks felt that the CVEDC as it now exists is perfectly designed for this purpose. She did not believe that the proposed merger would provide any benefits in this regard.

Chair Quinn believes that this proposed merger is comparable to the upcoming merger of Northfield Town and Northfield Village in that duplication of services would be eliminated, resulting in more efficiency. Ms. Hill-Eubanks' main concern remains the structure of the new governing board, which she felt would dilute the ability of individual communities to affect regional planning and economic development decision-making.

Chair Quinn then thanked Ms. Hill-Eubanks for her informative report.

V. DEPARTMENT HEAD REPORT(S)

- a. Highway Superintendent Peter G. DeMasi.** Mr. DeMasi had provided the Board with a written report that summarized the Highway Department's August 2013 activities. This included road grading, ditching, covered bridge maintenance, culvert installation, roadside mowing, FEMA flood damage repairs (July 2013), RSMS Program roadwork, etc. Selectman Goslant asked how long do culverts last before having to be replaced. Mr. DeMasi estimated about ten (10) to fifteen (15) years. He added that there were more heavy-duty culverts (i.e. galvanized steel and sturdier plastic) but he did not believe that the extra cost was cost effective.

Mr. DeMasi noted that the current plan is to pave Preston Drive, Winch View, and Terrace Drive. Also, if the Village authorizes paving its section of Crescent Avenue, he felt that the Town should pave the remaining one hundred feet (100'). Selectman Denny suggested that with possible construction of a new medical center on the Crescent, the Town perhaps should postpone this paving in case the road needs to be widened. Mr. DeMasi felt that the paving was needed now and should not be put off because of possible construction. Selectman Goslant then asked about the drainage issues on the Crescent. Mr. DeMasi confirmed that there were problems but this was all on private property (Norwich University). Selectman Bradley noted that drainage concerns would be a consideration during the Act 250 process for any proposed projects in the area.

Mr. DeMasi stated that roadwork on Forest Road began today. Northfield recently received a 90/10 grant from the Better Backroads Program to fund this project. New ditches and culverts will be installed in order to control stormwater runoff and reduce the number of road washouts. He and Manager Lewis met with the landowners to discuss this project. Manager Lewis added that easement agreements have been prepared for the landowners' signatures so that water can be diverted from the roadway and into the woods. Mr. DeMasi believes that the work can be completed before the end of September. As this is a steep road, there always would be potential runoff problems but this work should alleviate problems during normal rainstorms.

Mr. DeMasi added that the winter road sand is being delivered now and he is monitoring its quality as it arrives. He is impressed so far. Also, FEMA will pay for three inches (3") of plant mix to repair the flood damage on Boardman Road. The Town will pay for the remaining inch. Selectman Goslant was not sure if the extra expense was necessary for a one-house road. Mr. DeMasi stated that this would have to be the Board's decision. Selectman Bradley saw no reason to deviate from the Town's road standards policy at this time. Finally, Mr. DeMasi stated that the Town's new Western Star ten-wheeler truck has arrived at the dealership and now will be sent to Howard Fairfield so that the truck body can be installed. As there are three (3) other trucks ahead of it, it probably won't arrive in Northfield until early November. Until that time, the current truck (i.e. the "trade-in") will be in operation. Selectman Gadbois asked if all the backroads were graded this summer. Mr. DeMasi stated that all the backroads were graded at least once and some were graded two (2) or three (3) times if needed.

The Town Highway Subcommittee would like to hold a meeting soon. Mr. DeMasi said he would be available when the date and time is confirmed. Chair Quinn then thanked Mr. DeMasi for his report.

VI. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- a. **August 12, 2013 (Special Meeting).** Motion by Selectman Bradley, seconded by Selectman Denny, to approve the minutes. **Motion passed 4-0-1, with Selectman Gadbois abstaining.**
- b. **August 12, 2013 (Regular Meeting).** Motion by Selectman Bradley, seconded by Selectman Denny, to approve the minutes. **Motion passed 4-0-1, with Selectman Gadbois abstaining.**

VII. APPROVAL OF BILLS

- a. **Validation of Warrant #05-14.** Motion by Selectman Bradley, seconded by Selectman Gadbois, to validate the approval by signature of Warrant #05-14 in the amount of \$39,924.05. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
- b. **Warrant #06-14.** Motion by Selectman Bradley, seconded by Selectman Denny, in the amount of \$170,023.21. Selectman Bradley noted that the warrant's larger amount is because it includes the purchase of the aforementioned new highway truck for \$98,387 in Town Highway CIP funds. Selectman Bradley asked for an update on the sewer charges for the Municipal Pool. Manager Lewis felt that this matter would be best addressed at the upcoming Joint Board Meeting (see below). Selectman Goslant asked about a charge for fingerprint kit maintenance. Manager Lewis explained that when the Police Department received the grant monies to purchase the kit, participation in this particular maintenance program was a requirement. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
- c. **Warrant #06-14A.** Motion by Selectman Bradley, seconded by Selectman Denny, to approve Warrant #06-14A in the amount of \$39,115.90. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
- d. **Approval of Bi-Weekly Payroll through August 18, 2013.** Motion by Selectman Bradley, seconded by Selectman Denny, to approve the bi-weekly payroll in the amount of \$56,891.19. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

- e. **Approval of Bi-Weekly Payroll through September 1, 2013.** Motion by Selectman Bradley, seconded by Selectman Gadbois, to approve the bi-weekly payroll in the amount of \$58,498.16. Selectman Goslant asked why Police Department overtime costs were higher for this period. Manager Lewis thought it was probably due to the number of officers now at the Police Academy. Also, there were some special details that would be reimbursed, some Labor Day Weekend coverage, etc. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

VIII. SELECT BOARD

- a. **Current Expense Line of Credit (Disaster Relief, etc.).** Motion by Selectman Gadbois, seconded by Selectman Denny, to approve and sign the Current Expense Note in the amount of \$690,000 at 1.6% interest; approve and sign the Borrowing Resolution; and approve and sign the Tax Certificate. Manager Lewis stated that this payment was related to Tropical Storm Irene flood damages including the Fairground Road Bridge. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
- b. **Bond Anticipation Note (Highway Improvements).** Motion by Selectman Bradley, seconded by Selectman Denny, to approve and sign the Bond Anticipation Note in the amount of \$210,000 at 1.6% interest; to approve and sign the Borrowing Resolution; and to approve and sign the No-Arbitrage and Use of Proceeds Certificate. Manager Lewis explained that this is the outstanding balance of the 2010 loan for the Road Surface Management System (RSMS) program. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
- c. **Possible Board Appeal of FEMA Decision regarding Fairground Bridge.** Manager Lewis stated that Northfield has done all it can do to get approval for realigning the Fairground Bridge so that it would be less susceptible to future flooding, improve highway safety in the area, etc. However, FEMA has rejected all of the proposals put forward. Manager Lewis now is asking for the Board to waive its right to appeal so that we can go forward and build a permanent replacement bridge at the old location. It was the consensus of the Board that this matter has dragged on far too long. Motion by Selectman Quinn, seconded by Selectman Bradley, to waive the Board's right to appeal the FEMA decision. **Motion passed 5-0-0.** Manager Lewis will inform the owner of the mobile home park (Bob Tucker) of the Board's decision.
- d. **Bid Award for Supply & Maintenance of Municipal Employee Uniforms.** Manager Lewis stated that the contract for municipal uniforms will be re-bid because he reviewed the "unqualified bid" at the Select Board's request and found some merit to it. On subsequent advice of attorney, Manager Lewis decided that all bids would be rejected and the process restarted with more precise bid instructions.
- e. **Dickinson Drive Speed Limit Reduction.** Chair Quinn stated that reducing the speed limit on Dickinson Drive from thirty (30) to twenty-five (25) miles per hour (MPH) was one of the requests of the Northfield Falls Neighborhood Watch. Motion by Selectman Quinn, seconded by Selectman Denny, to lower the speed limit on Dickinson Drive to 25 MPH. Selectman Goslant was concerned that this might create a precedent for all side streets. Manager Lewis stated that almost all side streets already have a 25 MPH speed limit. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
- f. **Planning Commission Appointment.** Chair Quinn noted that Bonnie Kirn Donahue has expressed interest in serving on the Planning Commission. Since the commission members will be reviewing the current Municipal Plan in coming months, they would appreciate the extra assistance. Motion by Selectman Denny, seconded by Selectman Goslant, to appoint Bonnie Kirn Donahue to the Planning Commission. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
- g. **Regular Meeting Starting Time during Winter Months.** Chair Quinn asked if the Board members would support moving up the regular meetings from 7:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. during the upcoming winter months (October 2013 through March 2014). There were no objections. The Village Trustees will be asked if they would support holding the Joint Board Meetings at 6:00 p.m. as well.
- h. **First Consideration of Regulation of Solid Waste Disposal Ordinance.** Manager Lewis said that there have been recent concerns expressed about the proper disposal of local waste. The current Joint Litter Ordinance only prohibits dumping waste on the property of others but does nothing to prevent creating a junk yard on one's own property. Manager Lewis would like the current ordinance expanded to address this. Chair Quinn is concerned that someone might purchase a property that already contains a junk yard and then be expected to resolve the problem as quick as possible and at great expense. Manager Lewis confirmed that there would be a grace period allowed in such cases. In addition, the Town probably would have addressed this matter with the previous landowner before the property transfer.

Selectman Goslant believed that there were at least three (3) local businesses that would be affected by such new restrictions. Manager Lewis believed that given sufficient time to comply, each of these businesses should be able to rectify the situation without too much additional expense. This is only a first consideration and the Board members' suggestions will be incorporated as the process moves along. Chair Quinn stated that he has discussed this matter with Village Trustees' Chair Dennis Donahue and he agreed that the Town should take the lead in this consideration.

- i. **Joint Merger Transition Committee.** The committee's next meeting will be held on Wednesday, September 11, 2013 at 4:00 p.m. Selectman Denny noted that the main topic of this meeting will be the role of the new utility commissions in the merged community.
- j. **Joint Board Meeting.** The Town Selectmen and Village Trustees will next meet jointly on Tuesday, September 24, 2013 at 7:00 p.m.
- k. **Status Reports: Various Projects**
 - 1. **Municipal Employee Healthcare Insurance.** Chair Quinn stated that the Town has been looking at how the Vermont Health Insurance Exchange (that will go into effect on January 1, 2014) will affect the current healthcare plan for municipal employees. The outlook does not look favorable at this point.
 - 2. **FY 2014/2015 Municipal Budget.** Chair Quinn noted that Manager Lewis is working with the department heads in order to level fund the next fiscal year budget. Manager Lewis added that there will be an emphasis on determining what is really needed and what is excessive. This will be a combined budget for the merged municipality. Selectman Denny believed that the Town would be very fortunate to achieve this goal. Manager Lewis thinks that there will be more flexibility in the upcoming budget process.
 - 3. **One- and Two-House Roads.** Selectman Goslant would like property owners who reside on one- and two-house roads contacted to see if they would be interested in assuming responsibility for the maintenance of their roads. Selectman Bradley had no objections to taking this step but felt that very few property owners would be willing to take on this added expense. Selectman Denny hopes that any such communication will be carefully worded so that it does not cause a panic and give the impression that the Town is taking unilateral action to privatize roads. It was decided that Manager Lewis will draft such a letter that will be reviewed by the Board at the next meeting.
 - 4. **Joint Board Retreat.** Chair Quinn is working on the minutes of what turned out to be a very productive meeting. He felt that many positive suggestions had been provided.

IX. MANAGER'S REPORT. Manager Lewis had provided a written report to the Select Board members. He used this time to discuss some new items as well as answer any questions.

- a. **Criminal Forensic Training.** Manager Lewis was informed by Police Chief James Dziobek that Norwich University will be offering a training session led by a nationally-regarded expert. This will be a great opportunity for Northfield Police officers.
- b. **Combined Emergency Facility.** Manager Lewis will be meeting with a CVRPC grant specialist this week for some information on how to apply for a block grant for the proposed combined emergency facility.
- c. **Ambulance Bid Process.** Selectman Goslant felt that with both Norwich University and the aging population in Northfield, he has concerns on Manager Lewis' insistence that the Town rebid for "remount" (i.e. used) ambulance units. Selectman Goslant felt that with these special concerns, the community needs to have reliable emergency vehicles on hand. Manager Lewis believes that this is a cost-effective alternative to buying new vehicles that would not compromise public safety.

X. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION: Non-agenda items. There were none.

XI. ADJOURNMENT. Motion by Selectman Goslant, seconded by Selectman Denny, to adjourn.
Motion passed 5-0-0.

The Board adjourned at 9:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kenneth L. McCann

Kenneth L. McCann, Acting Clerk

These minutes are subject to approval at the next regular meeting.

An audio recording of this meeting is available in the Town Manager's Office.